

7 January 2019

Agenda Item: 4

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES**

### **IMPROVEMENT, CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION IN THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENT**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the approach to service improvement and transformation within the Children and Families department. There will be a short presentation provided for Committee.

#### **Information**

2. Within the Children and Families Department there are a number of key drivers for improvement and change. These include:
  - Improving outcomes for children, particularly the most vulnerable
  - Delivery of the Departmental Strategy to support the Council Plan
  - Meeting regulatory standards
  - Maximising value for money and productivity and meeting the challenges of increasing need and reducing resources.
3. The department currently has a Group Manager whose responsibilities include transformation of social care practice, 2 management grade staff and 2.5 Senior Practitioners who manage quality assurance, inspection readiness and support improvement and transformation across the whole department. There is the facility to request additional support from the Programmes and Projects Team in the Chief Executive's Department for specific projects.

#### **Improving outcomes for children**

4. In September 2018 the department revised its approach to overseeing change and planning through the implementation of both a monthly Continuous Improvement Board and a Resources Board. The Continuous Improvement Board ensures that the department takes an annual thematic look at the main areas of departmental business including not just current relative performance but historic and predicted trends, the impact of service improvements, new academic research and good practice. This information, alongside information from regulatory and peer review activity, is used to populate a rolling

improvement plan. The Resources Board is used to oversee the financial and workforce aspects of change including the improvement plan, Options for Change and programmes agreed by the Children and Young People's Committee.

5. Working with regional partners to improve performance and outcomes for children is a central strategy for the department. The government legislated to regionalise adoption services in the 2016 Education and Adoption Act, stating its intention that all individual local authority adoption agencies be combined into regional adoption agencies by 2020. The rationale is that, with 180 adoption agencies placing children in England, the system is too fragmented, and this has led to delay for children. Regionalisation is intended to improve outcomes for children, adopters and adoptive families. In November 2018 Policy Committee approved the establishment of a regional adoption agency for Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire (D2N2) by March 2019. This will be hosted by Nottinghamshire County Council.
6. One of the key change programmes in the department is the Remodelling Practice Programme. The purpose of this programme is to create a sustainable delivery model for services for vulnerable children and families which is high quality and financially sustainable. The programme aims to develop a positive working environment and provide teams with the tools and support to do their jobs in the most effective and efficient way, enabling the improvement of outcomes for children and families. There is also a programme of work underway to continue to make the front door to children's services, the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub), as efficient and streamlined as possible given the continuing increase in levels of referral.
7. The wide ranging changes made by government in 2014 to how children's Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) are supported by a multi-agency Accountability Board to improve outcomes has been set up which includes, alongside the school and health partners, parent and carer representation. This is an agenda where there has been legislative change which has increased demand alongside a growing population and a considerable pressure on resources. Predictive analytics show demand growing at approximately 10% year-on-year for at least the next four years with an impact on County Council and schools' budgets. The work with partner agencies, alongside a commitment to co-producing strategies, plans and services with parents and service users, is key to how services are transformed to deliver high quality at the best possible cost. The Local Authority must review key aspects of SEND every three years and in 2019 it is planned for this to be a fundamental look at how young people with disabilities successfully transition to adulthood.

### **Delivery of the Departmental Strategy to Support the Council Plan**

8. During this period the Council has continued to operate in a challenging financial landscape with ongoing change to local authority funding coupled with many Council services experiencing continued increases in demand. Progress has been made against the Children and Families Departmental Strategy, with the actions contributing across the range of Council Plan Commitments. Highlights include:

### **Commitment 1 – Families prosper and achieve their potential**

- The Young People's Health Strategy continues to be implemented through a multi-agency steering group: the appointment of a young person to a 'health champion' role is underway in order to ensure that the voice of young people is heard. In addition, the Health 4 Teens website has been expanded to include Health 4 Kids (5-11 years). Final preparations are taking place for launch in January 2019.

### **Commitment 2 – Children are kept safe from harm**

- Further improve the integration of social work and early help services so that families receive a more coordinated service and have the right level of support at the most appropriate time: in April 2018 a new step down process was launched, allowing for quicker transition of children from a Child Protection or Child in Need plan to an Early Help Plan with social workers able to pass directly to early help teams rather than coming via the Early Help Unit which lead to delays. To support the implementation of the changes managers from the Family Service have co-located with District Child Protection and Assessment Teams on a regular basis. During quarter 2 a themed audit on cases stepping down from Children's Social Care was conducted and the results will be used to identify the strengths and areas for development of the current system.

### **Commitment 3 – Children and Young People go to good schools**

- Work with key partners to successfully implement the Early Years Improvement Plan to close the attainment gap and prepare children for school: the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile has identified that increasing numbers of children are achieving a good level of development, and the attainment gap between children eligible for Free School Meals and their peers is starting to reduce. However, the challenge for Nottinghamshire is to increase the attainment of target groups and to consider the needs of summer born children who are the largest cohort who do not achieve a good level of development. There has been an increased focus by all partners on literacy in the early years, closing the word gap and speech, language and communication needs.
- Create additional high quality sustainable childcare places, to ensure adequate sufficiency levels to meet increasing demand for funded childcare following new duties placed on local authorities: the 2018 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment identified that there are sufficient childcare places to meet demand in all but one ward. The challenge for Nottinghamshire is to fill the childcare places already in existence and this is particularly problematic in areas of disadvantage. Work to retain existing childcare provision is also a priority with some small pre-schools and childminders now struggling financially since the launch of the new extended childcare offer; some are unable to attract children who are eligible for 30 hours of funded childcare a week; sometimes this is due to their inflexibility to offer the full 30 hours at times suitable for parents.

9. Further progress is expected to be made against the actions in the Departmental Strategy over the remaining six months of the year. Particular attention will be given to any commitment where delivery of an action has not yet been matched by a change in the measure of success linked to it.

## Meeting Regulatory Standards

10. All aspects of children's services provision are subject to a high level of legislation or statutory guidance. The ratings provided by Ofsted and other inspectorates can have significant implications for the reputation of the council, for council spending and for the recruitment of suitably qualified and talented staff to improve service provision. The severe financial difficulties in which Northamptonshire County Council finds itself are largely attributed to poor inspection outcomes in children's services. Given this, much of the Nottinghamshire Children and Families department's focus in terms of improvement is based on the standards set by regulators. Nottinghamshire is, alongside other top tier authorities, a part of the East Midlands Regional Improvement Alliance, which helps peer networks to challenge and support improvement in children's services. This work assists in preparedness for inspection and for the "annual conversations" that the local authority must have with Ofsted about the quality of education and social care provision.
11. Ofsted's "Inspection of Local Authority Children Services" (ILACS) programme commenced in January 2018. ILACS inspections focus on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements in relation to:
  - help and protection of children and young people
  - the experiences and progress of children in care
  - the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, including adoption
  - the experiences and progress of care leavers.
12. In addition, Ofsted evaluates the effectiveness of leaders and managers and the impact they have on the lives of children and young people. Local authorities judged to be 'good' (as Nottinghamshire currently is) or 'outstanding' at their most recent inspection will usually receive a short inspection of two weeks in duration every three years in addition to ungraded "focused visits" on particular themes. Should a local authority be judged to be 'inadequate' or to 'require improvement', the longer and more regular inspections will take place until the authority improves. It is expected that Nottinghamshire will receive both a focused visit and a Short Inspection (graded) in 2019.
13. Ofsted, alongside the Care Quality Commission (CQC), also operates a programme to look at the SEND provision in an area and HMI Probation inspects Youth Justice Services. Given the time since the last inspections it is also anticipated that these inspections may take place in 2019. Residential children's homes are also regularly inspected with all in Nottinghamshire currently being 'good' or 'outstanding'.
14. The Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) continues to be responsible for addressing underperformance in academies but also has a role in respect of schools eligible for intervention under the terms of the DfE Statutory Guidance on Schools Causing Concern, February 2018. These schools include those judged inadequate by Ofsted, those schools which fall within the definition of coasting and those schools which have failed to comply with a warning notice. RSCs can also issue a warning notice to local authority maintained schools. However, the DfE has recently announced that the RSC will no longer intervene in maintained schools which meet the coasting schools measure. Further guidance on a new measure to replace this is currently awaited. The regional Strategic School Improvement Boards, chaired by the RSCs and attended by all local authorities in the RSC's region, have now ended. The Strategic School Improvement funding (SSIF) is no longer

available for collaborative bids from Teaching School Alliances (TSAs) and Local Authorities. The department continues to support Nottinghamshire TSAs in the delivery of the successful SSIF bid to improve reading in 29 targeted Nottinghamshire primary schools.

### **Maximising value for money and productivity**

15. Both the Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Children's Services have recently published an analysis of the current financial pressure in children's services both through increases in demand around social care and special education and disability and reduced budgets. Given the pressures more generally on Local Authority finances the department recognises accurate forecasting of need is essential to making sure there is sufficient resource to meet statutory duties without the risk of over provision. Future need in relation to looked after children and children with disabilities is now being modelled using an increasingly sophisticated "predictive analytics" approach. Whilst in its infancy this work is allowing for more accurate planning for future years and as it is refined will allow its expansion across other areas of the department's work.
16. One of the objectives of the Remodelling Practice programme is to respond to the recommendations from the Newton Europe diagnostic review of children's services around progressing cases in a timely way in order to reduce caseloads and avoid additional staffing costs. A case progression model is being developed and will be piloted in January 2019. If effective, this approach will be rolled out across services. In addition, a social work career pathway project has been established, to improve the career progression opportunities available to social workers, and thus promote improved retention.
17. The Children and Families department recently carried out a review of how technology is currently being used to support practice and increase efficiency and productivity. The findings of the review can be found in **Appendix A**. The department has also established a Digital Development Board to maximise the benefits from current systems and to consider further developments in the use of systems and technology.
18. As stated above developing the department's approaches with other local authorities is central to how the challenges around the rising demand and costs of children in the care of the local authority are being addressed. Nottinghamshire is leading on a Social Impact Bond based service, working alongside Derby and Nottingham City Councils, aimed at using private money to reduce the numbers in the care system and the costs associated with residential placements. From this a partnership is also developing, with the additional involvement of Derbyshire County Council, to use the collective power of the organisations to get economies of scale from care providers and to maximise the use of those services provided by the Council through creating a new internal market. This work should be complete by the time the current East Midlands Regional Care Framework expires in 2020 and should begin delivering benefits during 2019.
19. During 2018 the department has established a Commissioning and Contracts Board to scrutinise the performance of all of the external contracts operated by the department and to provide oversight of tendering and purchasing exercises. This is supported by procurement and finance colleagues. The Board has clarified how contract management should operate within the department so that a consistent picture of performance and value can be ascertained and challenge made to less effective contracts. The Board also looks into how the large care budget could be spent differently to deliver the same or better results

at a lower cost through carefully considered investment. All projects through this route must have 'success criteria' whereby funding can be mainstreamed and 'failure criteria' where, if the targets are not being met, projects are wound down and the money returned to the central care budget. Whilst this model is in its early stages it has driven innovation and there are signs of some early impact.

20. The Education, Learning and Skills Division continues to provide a universal traded professional development offer, which complements the offer from the seven Nottinghamshire Teaching School Alliances (TSAs). The traded offer aims to contribute to the building of the capacity of the school-led system to continue to drive and sustain school improvement. All Nottinghamshire schools have access to the traded offer and consultancy support through a range of services including the Education Improvement Service, Governor Services, SEND services, Psychology Services, including the Educational Psychology Service (EPS), the Tackling Emerging Threats to Children service (TETC), and the Coping with Risky Behaviours training. Schools can also access support, guidance and safeguarding reviews led by the Safeguarding Children in Education Officer. Council advisers and officers signpost schools to relevant training opportunities, support or consultancy from Council support services and TSAs, as appropriate on request.
21. The department is currently undertaking a significant transformation exercise around education provision for children with SEND. This is in the context of a budget, a part of the Dedicated Schools Grant, which is significantly overspending and will continue into future years. Consultations have begun with schools and other partners to look at significant transformation in respect of the structure of provisions for children with SEND with a proposition to have a distinct multi-disciplinary team around each group of schools, increased specialist provision units in mainstream schools and a reduction in the use of charitable or private educational settings. If accepted this is likely to be a large change project with a target of implementation by September 2020.

### **Other Options Considered**

22. The matters set out in the report are intended to provide proportionate updates to the Sub-Committee of progress against key milestones and on the approach of the Children and Families department to transformation and service improvement.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

23. The Council's Constitution requires each Committee to review performance in relation to the services provided on a regular basis. The terms of reference of the Improvement and Change Sub-Committee include responsibility for monitoring performance of the Council Plan and Departmental Plans are an extension of this, therefore this recommendation seeks to fulfil this requirement.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

24. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below.

Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

25. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the Improvement and Change Sub-Committee considers the approach to innovation and change within the Children and Families Department and whether any actions are required in relation to the detail in the report.

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### **Constitutional Comments (LM 05/12/18)**

26. The Improvement and Change Sub-Committee is the appropriate body to consider the contents of the report. Members will need to consider whether there are any actions they require in relation to the issues contained within the report.

### **Financial Comments (SAS 11/12/18)**

27. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Business case for the establishment of a Regional Adoption Agency for Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Councils – report to Policy Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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